



Office of Management's Monthly Newsletter

The Beacon

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
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Ronald Hicks, Deputy Administrator

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web: www.fsis.usda.gov/om/adserv.htm
e-mail: fsis.servicebeacon@usda.gov

bea-con (bê' ken) *noun*

A signaling or guiding device, such as a lighthouse, located on a coast. A source of guidance or inspiration.

RON'S CORNER

FY 2000 Budget

by Ron Hicks
Deputy Administrator
Office of Management
Telephone: 202-720-4425

The FY 2000 Agriculture Appropriations Conference Bill was passed by the House of Representatives on October 1, 1999 and by the Senate on October 13, 1999; and was signed into law by the President on October 22, 1999.

The Agriculture Appropriations Act for FY 2000 includes \$649.4 million for FSIS, which is an increase of \$32.4 million over the FY 1999 Appropriation and \$3.5 million less than the President's budget request for FY 2000. Of the total increase, \$18.5 million is for pay costs, \$11.0 million is for additional in-plant staffing, and \$2.9 million is for the President's Food Safety Initiative. The President's Food Safety Initiative includes \$0.5 million for emergency response coordination with the States, \$1.9 million for pathogen testing of State inspected product under HACCP, and \$0.5 million for State laboratory validation under HACCP.

The Agency is in the process of reviewing the appropriation to determine funding priorities and allocations. Plans are underway to aggressively increase in-plant employment.

For more information on the FY 2000 budget, point your web browser to the OM web page at:

<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/om>

Donald Musacchio Recommended for Assistant Deputy Administrator

Recently, I announced our recommendation of Donald Musacchio for the position of Assistant Deputy Administrator of OM. Until his recent selection, Don served as the Director of the Labor and Employee Relations Division since 1994. Prior to that, he held various positions in Labor and Employee Relations with the Department of Navy. Don is currently the vice-chair of the Interagency Labor Relations Forum, a group of labor relations professionals who represent management.

Don joins Jeanne Axtell and me in sharing the responsibility of managing all of OM. He will also have lead responsibility for administrative services, human resources, labor and employee relations, and civil rights.

ASD Director Selected

I am pleased to announce the selection of Ramona Swann as the new Director of Administrative Services Division (ASD). Until her selection, Ramona served as Chief of the Procurement and Property Branch, ASD and as Contracting

Head of Activity for FSIS. A Federal government employee for over 20 years, she has been employed at USDA, the Department of Transportation, and also served in the military with the U.S. Air Force.

ASD provides contracting, real property, supplies, forms and records management, printing, occupational safety and health, and environmental management services for FSIS.

OM Information Fair

On October 14, OM held the first Information Fair at the USDA Carver Center in Beltsville, MD. The Fair provided an opportunity for each Division and Staff set up one or more booths to display information about the services OM provides to the Agency. Employees learned about the many diverse functions that we carry out since the reorganization of FSIS in 1996 and

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1997. Initial feedback from participants indicates that the Fair was a valuable experience and that it created an informal environment for employees to network with their colleagues.

WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

Focus on: First Meeting of the Steering Committee

by Yvonne Davis, Chair
Telephone: 202-720-5632

The Workforce of the Future Steering Committee held its first meeting October 19-21 at the Washington Plaza Hotel in Washington, DC. I am pleased to report that we completed our objective for the first meeting. The Steering Committee members worked hard and reached consensus on our charter and guiding principles, which will now go through one last review by the Administrator before becoming final. (The draft documents considered by the Steering Committee were published in the October 1999 *Beacon*. The final versions as approved by the Committee and endorsed by the Administrator will be published in the December 1999 *Beacon*.)

The Steering Committee, or WOFSC, also began development of an action plan. One of our key "deliverables" will be an integrated timeline. The integrated timeline will identify milestones for all of the individual projects and initiatives that are together moving us toward the workforce of the future to support the food safety and consumer protection system of the future.

Thanks on behalf of the Steering Committee to the project leaders or representatives who took time from their busy schedules to brief WOFSC on their initiatives and timeframes, as well as to answer questions. This background will

help us develop an integrated timeline that we hope will be a useful tool for each group and all employees. The three information panels and members are listed below:

- Meshing strategic food safety planning and budgeting processes: Ray Bolyard, Charles Danner, Ralph Stafko, Marlin Waller, Robert Tynan.
- Defining the jobs of the future for the food safety and consumer protection system of the future: Dale Boyle, Mike Grasso, Jerry Skufe, Richard Van Blargan, Marlin Waller.
- An employer of choice: Retaining and hiring a diverse workforce: Karen Benham, Shelia Clemons, Peggy Nunnery, Laurie Lindsay.

The Workforce of the Future Steering Committee, which includes representatives from all program areas, the bargaining unit and employee organizations, is listed in Attachment 1.

The next full meeting of the Steering Committee is tentatively planned for late January or early February. Much of our work will be carried on between meetings by electronic mail and teleconference meetings. The next issue of the *Beacon* will include more information on our progress, as well as a Workforce of the Future Focus piece on the HACCP-Based Inspection Models Project. (Between *Beacons*, don't forget to check the weekly *Thursday Report* on Outlook or HPDesk!)

Questions on workforce of the future issues can also be e-mailed. Employees on Outlook can send their questions to the *Workforce of the Future* mailbox. (Type all four words in the "name".) Until we have an HPDesk mailbox, employees on HPDesk can send their questions to Sharin Sachs. Only the core team

member personally answering an employee's question will see the employee's name. However, the Steering Committee will publish frequently asked questions and answers in upcoming issues of the *Beacon* and/or *Thursday Report* for the benefit of employees who might have the same question.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Compliance Assistance, Review and Evaluation (CARE)

by J. P. Porter
Civil Rights Division
Telephone: 515-727-8979

The Civil Rights Division (CRD) has oversight responsibility for the FSIS Civil Rights Program. One of the tools used to measure how well an Agency is doing in carrying out its responsibilities, particularly in the area of Affirmative Employment Programs (AEP) for Minorities, Women and Individuals With Disabilities, is to conduct program reviews.

Last fiscal year the CRD developed and implemented the Compliance Assistance, Review and Evaluation (CARE) Program to ensure the Agency is in compliance with Federal laws and regulations and USDA and FSIS policies and practices as they relate to equal employment opportunity. CARE is designed to provide management with recommendations that will help to improve opportunities for minorities, women and individuals with disabilities in their organizational units. The conduct of compliance reviews is mandated by 29 CFR 1614. CARE reviews are included in Administrator Tom Billy's performance standards and the Agency's Civil Rights Strategic Plan.

Civil Rights Division Director Shelia Clemons selects organizational units at random for review. Four CARE on-site visits, two districts and two organizational units, were reviewed

during the fourth quarter of FY 1999. Team members consisted of CRD and other Office of Management employees. The Team focused primarily on AEP policy design and oversight, management, guidance and coordination and implementation during the on-site visit. Also, they conducted interviews of managers, supervisors and employees as well as reviewed documentation.

Program managers are notified 30 days in advance of a review. The CARE visit is completed in one week. However, the review is not completed until after the required documents are analyzed and evaluated. Upon completion of the review, a Report of Findings and Recommendations is sent to the review site manager, the appropriate Deputy Administrator and the Department's Office of Civil Rights. Reports for programs reporting to the Administrator are submitted to the Associate Administrator. Programs are given ninety days to report on the implementation of all recommendations.

Eight CARE visits will be scheduled in FY 2000. The visits will be conducted at headquarters and in the field. If you have any questions or need additional information on CARE, please contact Marquerita Crawford, Acting Chief, Program Planning, Analysis and Compliance Branch, CRD, at 202-205-0743 or 1-800-269-6912.

VDIP

The Nature of Conflict

by Kathy Welsh

Telephone: 202-720-5657

Milo Christianson

Telephone: 612-370-2000

Labor and Employee Relations Division

Whenever a VDIP intervenor serves as a neutral to help resolve an

employee concern or dispute, chances are a conflict is involved. A conflict is an antagonistic state or action involving divergent ideas, interests or perceptions.

Conflict is a process. It is often ongoing, amorphous and intangible. A dispute may be one of several products of an unresolved conflict. It is tangible and concrete. A lawsuit would be an example of a dispute. A true conflict generally occurs when one person cannot get something because the other person(s) has it or prevents someone else from getting it.

There are a lot of common perceptions surrounding conflict. Let's look at just a few of them.

1. Conflict is Avoidable – Conflict is not avoidable. It is an inescapable part of life since each of us has our own ideas, opinions and needs. Conflict arises from a clash of perceptions, goals or values. Although conflict is a fact of life, it should not become a way of life.
2. Conflict is Always Negative - Conflict can serve as an opportunity for growth since it can stimulate new ways of thinking and behaving. Therefore, conflict can be both *positive* and *negative*. It is *positive* when it (1) is a symptom of discontent, (2) produces change for the better, (3) produces gains, innovations and new ideas, (4) fosters unity and understanding, and (5) brings about behavior changes. Conflict is *negative* when it (1) escalates, (2) leads to hostility and fear, or (3) is suppressed.
3. Conflict Involves a Struggle of Absolutes - Often parties to a conflict perceive a conflict as a contest between good and evil. It is possible, however, that the conflict involves preferences

rather than values. Therefore, it is not a struggle of absolutes.

Hopefully, the above sheds a little more light on the nature of conflict. If you have any questions, please contact VDIP on 1-800-860-VDIP (8347) or 612-370-2033 in Minneapolis or 202-205-0066 in DC.

SUPPLIES

Grease (Wax) Pencils

by Pete Bridgeman

Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 301-504-4222

Ben Carson, DVM, from Childress, TX, wrote: "We are in need of ...a Grease Pen or Marker. Preferably, the mechanical type that advances the grease lead. The wet, damp working conditions on the slaughter floor prevents other markers from working efficiently. We mark on the surface of the aluminum clipboards our tallies during inspection. Then at the end of the day, the grease marks are wiped off. The grease pen is the only marker that I have found that works well. In larger plants they have mechanical counters, but in smaller plants we need the grease pens. We would also, of course, have a need for the refill leads." Thanks for bringing this need to our attention, Dr. Carson. We'll add these to our inventory. They're actually called, "Mechanical Wax Pencils", unit of issue will be DZ (dozen). These should be available by December, so we will issue the Item Number in next month's (December) issue of *The Beacon*.

1/5 - Cut Manila File Folders

Dr. Carson also brought to our attention the need for letter size file folders that have the 1/5 cut instead of the straight cut. We have these available, Item Number 4839, Unit of Issue is HD (100). These were inadvertently omitted from the Supply Catalog.

Hog Rings

An Employee Suggestion from Dr. Lubomira Soroko in Roswell, NM, requested that we add Hog Rings to the inventory, for use in securing the U.S. Suspect and U.S. Condemned Ear Tags to the animals. While the plant usually provides these items, they apparently are not actually required to, and in the case of some of the smaller plants, our employees have had to purchase these items and get reimbursed. We will maintain a supply of these for those of you who work in plants that do not provide them. These should become available by December, the Item Number will be listed in the December issue of the Beacon. The description will be "Hog Rings", and the unit of issue BX (Box, approximately 200 rings). Thanks for your suggestion, Dr. Soroko.

Postage Stamp Dispensers

A customer feedback form from Ervern Nekola in Tama, IA, states, "It would be nice to have Landover supply dispensers for rolls of (government postage) stamps. The kind that can be purchased at the Post Office for a quarter. They would pay for themselves by the number of stamps that would not get wet from humidity, or get lost." We agree, that would be nice, and would possibly save some stamps in the long run, as well. We've placed an order for these, and should have them in stock by December. Look for an item number in the December *Beacon*. Thanks for the idea, Ervern!

Go Ahead - Mix Your Orders!

You may have noticed that in the announcements of the 3 new items listed above, we did not specify whether they are Specialty Items or Supply Items. That is because, for the purposes of placing orders, *it no longer matters!* Yes, you read right:

You do not have to separate your orders anymore!

Several months ago, the Supply Items were moved into the same warehouse as the Specialty Items and Forms, and Landover has been working to consolidate the 2 systems into 1 system. This effort was completed on October 27th, so all items, including Forms, Specialty Items and Supplies, are now in the same system.

Check Your Envelopes

Landover has been receiving a lot of mailings intended for the Financial Processing Center in Des Moines, IA. It's usually completed FSIS Forms 6200-10, 6200-11, and FSIS Form 7010-4, which should be going to the Data Services Unit at the Financial Processing Center. We also occasionally receive completed T & A's from inspectors in the field. These are coming to Landover in the pre-addressed envelopes for Landover. We can't process your T & A in Landover. The form number for the Des Moines envelope is FSIS 1400-89, and the form number for the Landover envelope is FSIS 1400-90, and it appears that people are getting these mixed up. Please double-check to make sure you place your pay documents in the correct envelope addressed to Des Moines.

VEHICLES

Reporting Monthly Mileage of Government Vehicles

by *Brian McNiff*
Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 301-504-4221

All drivers are to report the mileage of their government vehicle on the GSA Form 494 that is mailed to them monthly. Several Fleet Management Centers have contacted several drivers and have requested that the mileage be reported electronically through

Mileage Express Program on the Internet. In most cases the drivers do not have access to the Internet and are to continue to submit the GSA Form 494 to GSA. This card will continue to be forwarded to all drivers listed at the point of contact for the assigned vehicle. Some drivers have called this office and were told that these cards will be discontinued in the future. This is not true. If any drivers are not receiving the GSA Form 494 or the maintenance notices, please call me at above telephone number.

TRAVEL

Travel Reimbursement Delays

by *Barbara McNiff*
Budget Division
Telephone: 202-720-3061

If you have a Visa travel card and are now experiencing delays in receiving travel reimbursements for properly submitted travel claims, the Bank of America (BOA) has been advised of your problem. (See Attachment 2)

I strongly suggest each Visa cardholder affected by this delay in reimbursements, *to please contact BOA* and advise them of the situation. If satisfactory results are not obtained, *contact* the Administrative Staff or the Resource Management Staff in your Program or District. There are several assigned staff members in each of those offices who can assist you further.

ISSUANCES

Recent Agency Issuances

By *Mary Wissman*
Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 301-504-4233

The following notices and directive have been issued since the October 1999 edition of *The Beacon*. Many

recent issuances are available in an electronic format from the "PCDIALS" library in Opendesk and from the "Agency Issuances" public folder in the Exchange mail system (Outlook).

Notice 31-99 (9/27/99)
Interview Policy for GS 13 Through
15 Positions

Notice 32-99 (10/8/99)
Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Open
Season
November 15, 1999, Through
January 31, 2000

Directive 4451.11 (9/24/99)
Home Marketing Incentive Program

Directives and notices are
distributed automatically to
applicable Agency employees and
offices. Additional copies are
available from:

USDA FSIS ASD P&DS
MAILDROP 5241
5601 SUNNYSIDE AVENUE
BELTSVILLE MD 20705-5241

Tel: 301-504-4242
Fax: 301-504-4277

HUMAN RESOURCES

Child Care

We all know that choosing childcare arrangements is a very personal decision for parents. This decision involves a lot of thought and consideration because the decision we make on who cares for our children ultimately influences their future development.

There are a number of resources available in most of our local communities or to a number of Federal and national organizations, but we may not always know how to find the high quality child care we need or where to turn for help. Most

of us know there are 3 primary kinds of childcare: childcare centers, childcare homes or child care within your own home. In addition there may be supplemental child care available such as: before and after school care; vacation and summer programs; part-day preschool programs and nursery schools; programs for children with special needs; and the Head Start Program.

Child Care Centers usually have a staff of caregivers that provide care for groups of children; this staff usually has some type of early child care training, is licensed by the State and earns accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Child Care homes are usually in a single caregivers' home where care is provided for a small group of children; are usually registered or licensed in the State and may be licensed by the National Association of Family Day Care (NAFDC). The third type involves a caregiver who comes to your home or who lives in your home such as a "babysitter"; a professional "nanny", or a student "au pair." Since there is no licensing procedure for this type of caregiver, most parents know they have to check references carefully as the prospective "employer", pay social security and Federal unemployment, and in some States, provide workers' compensation and State Unemployment compensation.

No matter what your caregiver needs are, you are not alone in your search for quality day care. Every parent wants the best quality care available within his or her means. Selecting childcare for your son or daughter may be one of the most stressful decisions you make as a parent. If you don't know where to start, or just want to find out more about what childcare resources are available to you, we can help you. Learn more about those resources; licensing and accreditation procedures; the NAEYC or the

NAFDC; practical steps you can take in finding quality child care; tips for monitoring the quality of child care selected; appendices of child care referral agencies; suggestions for telephone interview questions for child care centers or homes and for onsite interviews; federally sponsored day care centers; financial assistance for low income parents; and Federal and national child care organizations.

Contact the Performance, Evaluation and Recognition Branch, HRD on 202-720-7983 to get a copy of OPM's Handbook of Child Care and Elder Care Resources or send a fax request to 202-690-2773 or send an E-mail request to Pat.Forslind@usda.gov. You may also want to utilize the Child Care Referral Service available through the Employee Assistance Program. Your EAP will provide you with information that will help you evaluate your child care options, specific detail on several child care providers including their cost and vacancy status, and ongoing assistance until your child care needs are met. For help with childcare, call the EAP at 1-800-523-5668 (or TDD 1-800-882-7610).

National Family Caregivers Month

The month of November has been designated as National Family Caregivers Month by the Office of Personnel Management and the Health Care Financing Administration. It is a time for us all to remember and be appreciative of our nation's caregivers that have made significant sacrifices to care for relatives and friends who are incapacitated by age, illness, or disability.

The role of caregiving is a very rewarding, but often stressful task. Family Caregivers frequently have to balance the demands of their children, family members, friends and their jobs. It is estimated that at least seven million caregivers help

disabled and frail older persons to live in their homes and communities. It is also estimated that family caregivers assist 95% of older persons needing some type of help.

Look around you, and if you are aware of those colleagues who provide care for elder friends and relatives, take a moment to show your support to these hardworking and dedicated folks. Let all of us in FSIS recognize them for their generosity of spirit and unselfish actions on behalf of others as we celebrate this special month set aside in their honor.

Leave Transfer Recipients

1. Martha Stamps
OFO, AR; Serious Illness
2. Jackie Copeland
OFO, DC; Illness
3. Annie Stewart
POB, MN; Serious Illness
4. Kasturi Basu
OFO, DC; Surgery
5. Linda Cole
OPPDE, DC; Serious Illness
6. Sonya West
OPPDE, DC; Maternity
7. Joyce Schultz
HRFO, MN; Serious Illness
8. FO-98-0031*
OFO, AR; Serious Illness
9. Stephanie Showell
OFO, DE; Family Illness
10. Michael Schwochert
OFO, CO; Surgery
11. Willia Stepney
OM, DC; Maternity
12. Michelle Carpenter
OFO, OH; Complications
w/pregnancy
13. Linda Carey
EMS, DC; Surgery
14. Gary Feters
OFO, IA; Serious Illness
15. Nancy Clyburn
OPHS, DC; Surgery
16. FO-99-0007*
OFO, SC; Serious Illness
17. George Olson
OFO, MN; Family Illness
18. Kellie Upshaw
EMS, DC; Maternity
19. Traci Edmond
EMS, DC; Maternity
20. Mary Sutton
OPHS, GA; Complications
w/pregnancy
21. FO-99-0010*
OFO, NC; Surgery
22. Cheryl Evans
OFO, AR; Surgery
23. Octavia Thomas
OFO, GA; Complications
w/pregnancy
24. Mose Tyler
OFO, CA; Surgery
25. Cynthia Dixon
OM, DC; Illness
26. FO-99-0017*
OFO, OH; Surgery
27. Marilyn Weber
FPC, IA; Illness
28. Robert Martz
OFO, IA; Serious Illness
29. Alma Lindsey
OFO, IL; Illness
30. Joseph Banales
OFO, CA; Illness
31. Lorraine Kauffman
OM, DC; Maternity
32. Charles Olson
OFO, WI; Serious Illness
33. Betty Morgan
OFO, AR; Family Illness
34. Carolyn Woolfolk
OFO, DC; Surgery
35. Donna Ogdahl
OFO, MN; Surgery
36. Dorothy Fanick
OFO, TX; Serious Illness
37. FO-99-0027
OFO, NC; Surgery
38. Carol Leonard
OM, IA; serious Illness
39. Theresa Spoering
OFO, MN; Surgery
40. FO-99-0033
OFO, TX
41. FO-99-0034
OFO, SD; Family Illness
42. Karen Wratchford
OFO, KY; Surgery
43. Maureen Murphy
OFO, OK; Surgery
44. Tammy Love
OFO, AR; Surgery
45. Steve Engels
OFO, IA; Serious Illness

46. Sue Engels
OFO, IA; Family Illness
47. Michael Craig
OFO, NE; Family Illness
48. Nicole Wareham
OFO, IN; Maternity
49. Michelle Long
OM, DC; Surgery
50. Glenda Snyders
OFO, KS; Surgery
51. Angela Cuello
OFO, TX; Serious Illness
52. Mona Eder
OFO, IL; Maternity
53. Gary Palubicki
OFO, MN; Surgery

While not consenting to the publication of their names, certain LTP recipients are assigned a number that they may provide to their co-workers if they choose so that donated leave may be transferred to their account. Any questions on the LTP should be referred to the Human Resources Field Office on 1-800-370-3747 for field employees and to the Classification and Compensation Branch for HQ employees on 202-720-6287.

September/October Retirements

Delbert P. Allen, FI, OFO, Elizabeth, NJ, 09/30/99, 16 Years
Miriam J. Cook, Financial Specialist, OM, Washington, DC, 10/01/99, 26 Years
Leonard Crabb, FI, OFO, Rochester, NY, 10/01/99, 26 Years
Melvin L. Crubaugh, FI, OFO, Friona, TX, 10/01/99, 35 Years
Walter Cruz, FI, OFO, Omaha, NE, 10/01/99, 39 Years
Luis H. Cuevas, SVMO, OFO, Live Oak, FL, 09/10/99, 32 Years
Debra K. Dove, FI, OFO, Moorefield, WV, 09/25/99, 8 Years
Gary R. Feters, FI, OFO, Des Moines, IA, 10/09/99, 16 Years
Michael A. Gangel, VMO, OFO, McPherson, KS, 10/01/99, 32 Years
John H. Goth, FI, OFO, Dodge City, KS, 09/30/99, 16 Years
Robert R. Hackworth, FI, OFO, Dodge City, KS, 09/11/99, 8 Years

Clarence Handy, FI, OFO,
Millsboro, DE, 09/11/99, 19 Years
Truman Harris, Consumer Safety
Insp., OFO, Santa Clara, CA,
09/30/99, 23 Years
Ada Carolyn Henry, Supvy.
Chemst., OFO, St. Louis, MO,
10/03/99, 37 Years
Raymond Highland, FI, OFO,
Lexington, NE, 09/25/99, 18 Years
Gerald D. Hill, FI, OFO, Nashville,
AR, 09/24/99, 14 Years

Scheduling Annual Leave

This is a reminder that employees and supervisors have a mutual responsibility to plan and schedule leave throughout the year. For Bargaining Unit employees, this scheduling provision is found page 51 of the National Basic Agreement. This is particularly important, as the end of the leave year approaches, for employees who have or will have "use/lose" annual leave.

All employees should be aware that annual leave subject to forfeiture must be scheduled *in writing* at least 3 biweekly pay periods prior to the end of the leave year. This year the deadline for scheduling annual leave is *November 20, 1999*. Leave should be requested on Form SF-71, "Request for Leave or Approved Absence," leave roster, calendar, or other memorandum. Without this written documentation, annual leave forfeited because of exigencies of public business or employee sickness cannot be restored *under any circumstances, even in extenuating situations*.

When planning leave usage, it is important to remember that scheduling substantial amounts of leave at the end of the year increases the risk of forfeiture, and leave forfeited due to fluctuations in routine or recurring workload will not support restoration. Many offices experience end-of-the-year deadlines, training, and travel. Leave forfeited as a result of such occurrences generally is not restorable unless, a bona fide

exigency requiring cancellation of the leave and precluding rescheduling of the cancelled leave has been properly declared and documented. The exigency is to be approved *prior* to cancellation of an employee's leave.

By regulation, only a bona fide exigency or operational emergency of such magnitude or significance that the work operation cannot be performed or conducted, will support the cancellation of leave. Emergencies of this magnitude should occur infrequently. In addition, supervisors must consider all possible alternatives or options (e.g., rescheduling leave, reassigning work to other employees, obtaining an extension on a deadline) before proposing to cancel an employee's leave. In short, supervisors should recommend canceling leave only when all other available alternatives have been exhausted. Requests for leave restoration must include a description of the other alternatives considered.

Also, on occasion, an additional holiday or half-holiday (e.g., Christmas Eve, December 24) may be granted towards the end of the leave year. If an employee has use/lose leave scheduled on a day granted as an additional holiday, and the hours are not used and subsequently forfeited, there is no authority to restore the leave.

For more detailed information concerning leave restoration, employees and supervisors should review the Agency Notice on *Restoration of Forfeited Annual Leave* which will be issued shortly to all offices. The notice addresses the procedures and documents required for requesting restoration of forfeited annual leave. This is also addressed in FSIS Directive 4630.2, Leave.

If you have any questions or need additional assistance, please contact the Classification and Compensation Branch on 202-720-6287.

WAE Limitations

*by: Pay and Leave Section
Human Resources Division
Telephone: 800-370-3747 or 612-370-2000*

As you are aware, WAE's are limited to a total of 1280 hours worked in a service year. It is very important that supervisors inform employees to carefully keep track of base hours worked (Transaction Code 01 and 11) so that they do not work over the service year limitation. The NFC generates Service Year Limitation Reports that are sent to the District Offices for supervisory review. Any discrepancies should be brought to the attention of the Servicing Personnel Office (HRFO for field employees and Employment Services and Policy Branch for headquarters employees) so that a correction may be processed.

Form W-2 And Current Addresses

The 1999 Form W-2, Wage and Tax Statement, will be mailed to the employee's residence in January 2000. Consequently, it is extremely important that employees assure that their current home address is correctly recorded in the personnel system. The residence address contained in the system can be verified by checking the name and address block on the Form AD-334, Statement of Earnings and Leave. Incorrect residence addresses should be immediately updated through submission of a revised Form AD-349, Declaration Sheet directly to the Human Resources Field Office (HRFO) in Minneapolis, MN for field employees or ESPB in Washington, DC for headquarters employees).

Progress Review (M-Z Bargaining Unit Employees)

*by: Classification, Performance and Recognition Section
Human Resources Division
Telephone: 800-370-3747 or 612-370-2000*

As a part of the performance appraisal process, ALL supervisors are required to conduct periodic reviews during the appraisal cycle.

According to the Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article XXI, Section B, periodic reviews between a bargaining unit employee and the rating supervisor shall take place every 4 months during the appraisal period. One of these reviews shall also coincide with the discussion of the annual performance rating. Therefore, for M-Z employees, grades 1-12, the second progress review (i.e., 8 month review) must be completed by January 1.

In conducting these reviews, supervisor's should refer to the progress review checklist in any User's Guide for specific points to cover in the discussion with the employee. Employee and supervisor should initial and date block 16 of the FSIS 4430-5 form to certify completion of the progress review discussion.

Position Description Review: Responsibilities and Conduct Discussion

This is a reminder that two important steps in the performance appraisal process involve certifications of position description adequacy and understanding of regulations on employee responsibilities and conduct. Therefore, employees whose ratings will be due at either the end of February or April should review their position descriptions now to assure they adequately describe their major duties and responsibilities. Then, during the performance appraisal discussions, employees will be prepared to either

indicate that their position description is accurate, or explain what changes are required. For employees indicating that a position description change is needed, written documentation should be prepared explaining specifically what aspects of their job are not adequately covered in the description and what efforts have been made with their supervisors to resolve the differences. This written documentation should be forwarded through channels to the Servicing Personnel Office for consideration.

Regulations concerning employee responsibilities and conduct are found in FSIS Directive 4735.3. All employees are responsible for knowing and understanding these regulations and conducting themselves in strict accordance with their provisions. Therefore, prior to your next performance appraisal discussion these regulations should be reviewed, and any questions about them raised during your discussion of this subject with your supervisor.

Requests For Leave

*by: Benefits and Workers Compensation Section
Human Resources Division
Telephone: 800-370-3747 or 612-370-2000*

It is each employee's responsibility to request leave, whether it be sick, annual or Leave Without Pay (LWOP), in advance whenever possible. Supervisors should remind employees of their responsibilities for leave requests. Often, employees are unaware of the requirements or in the trauma of injury or disability may forget to do so. We have encountered some difficulties in this regard, especially with employees who have experienced on-the-job injuries and are seeking OWCP benefits. Form SF-71, Application for Leave, must be submitted by the injured employee through program

channels, to cover absence from the job.

While on the subject of leave, it is important to remember that the only Government program for temporary disability is sick leave. If used unwisely, you may find yourself without income. For Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) employees, unused sick leave also becomes additional service credit at retirement. Although this benefit is not available to new employees covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), it is still wise to accumulate sick leave so that if you do encounter a period of medical incapacitation, you will be able to retain continued income. Think twice before using sick leave for minor medical problems.

Missing Any Mail?

Did you know that USDA official mail addressed to you cannot be forwarded? Also, that the Thrift Savings Plan uses the address on record at your Personnel Office to mail your Participant Statements, Loan checks, Withdrawal check, Personal Identification Number (PIN), and tax documents?

If your address is incorrect, you may be missing mail: for example, your TSP loan or withdrawal check and important information about payroll or TSP account may be lost or it may take months to forward. You must notify your personnel office when your address changes in order to receive official government mailings and TSP information. NOTE: This is especially true of the TSP, as they cannot accept a change of address directly from you.

If your address has changed you must complete Form AD-349, available from your supervisor or from fax on demand at 1-800-370-3747 ext. 2002, and submit it through normal channels to your personnel office. *This will keep the*

record straight and you will not miss those important mailings about personnel information, payroll actions or the Thrift Savings Plan.

D-I-V-O-R-C-E

This may have been the title of a very popular Country Western tune, but in today's rapidly changing society, it can be a very baffling experience. Mechanisms for providing benefits have expanded over the years and the process have become more complicated. In order to assure that you are receiving the most efficient use of the benefits available to you, we need your help.

One of the major areas of societal change, which is affecting the benefits area, is the impact of divorce on health benefits. We now see many more instances of this occurring among Federal employees. It is important that you realize that your Human Resources Division servicing office (HRD) needs to be aware of situations like this due to the effect divorce can have on your entire benefits package.

In the area of Health Benefits, if there are no eligible children to be covered after a divorce, the Federal employee needs to change from "Family" to "Self-Only" coverage. This requires notification to the Human Resources Division servicing office. The divorced spouse has immediate rights to continued group Health insurance coverage through Temporary Continuation of Coverage (TCC) but there is a 60-day "window" in which to apply. Again, you must notify the Human Resources Division servicing office to assure that this benefit is extended. If rights to apportionment or survivor benefits are granted in the divorce decree, there are provisions for permanent health coverage, which your Human Resources Division servicing office can advise you on. Similarly, children reaching age 22 can be

extended for 36 months of TCC if your Human Resources Division servicing office is advised within 60 days of the child's birthday.

You may also wish to review your Life Insurance coverages at a time like this and adjust them accordingly. Option C (Family Coverage) needs to be cancelled if there are no eligible family members. And, of course, any Designations of Beneficiary related to life insurance, retirement, Thrift Savings Plan, and unpaid compensation (last salary check and payment for annual leave), need to be reevaluated in terms of your new status. In all of these areas your Human Resources Division servicing office is ready to help you. Just give us a call at 202-720-6617 for headquarters employees; or 1-800-370-3747 for field employees.

Deaths in Service

Mr. Amilcar Lopez-Flores, FI, OFO, Guntersville, AL, 08/29/99
Mr. Lyle O. Erras Jr., FI, OFO, Emporia, KS, 08/23/99
Mr. Tim Stanley, FI, OFO, Hawarden, IA, 08/20/99
Mr. Orvan H. Klinkenberg, FI, OFO, Dubuque, IA 10/13/99

YEAR 2000

Y2K Update

by Greg Curtis
 Automated Information Systems Division
 Telephone: 202-720-4849

The Year 2000 (Y2K) is rapidly approaching and FSIS is completing preparations to ensure that its computer systems and equipment with embedded microchips will operate successfully as the century date changes. FSIS' mission critical systems have been certified as Y2K compliant, almost all non-mission critical systems have been fixed, and much equipment is being replaced. The critical FSIS

buildings have been found to be compliant. FSIS has also been assured that all National Finance Center systems that it participates in, such as the payroll system, have been repaired, tested and are compliant.

Despite the Agency's systems readiness efforts, FSIS was required to develop and test a business continuity and contingency plan (BCCP). This plan would assure normal operation of critical agency business processes, if FSIS experiences significant problems during the transition to the year 2000. The Agency developed a master plan, then developed local contingency plans for districts. FSIS recently completed the testing of district BCCP's using two pilot districts—Beltsville and Boulder. During the next 2 months, BCCP's will be developed for the remaining district offices, the three FSIS labs, and the Technical Service Center (TSC). To be on the safe side, the continuity and contingency planning assumes the worst—Agency systems down, utilities disrupted, communications out—and hopes for the best in assuring the public a safe, abundant food supply. What we have seen so far gives us every reason for confidence in our Y2K preparations.

The Agency is also addressing non-agency entities that have an impact on the overall success of the "food safety" mission area. For example, FSIS has been getting information from the State inspection programs about their Y2K preparations and counseling them on readiness. In addition, the District Managers have been requested to have the Circuit Supervisors contact the plants and ask whether they anticipate having any Y2K problems. This is a very important action by the Circuit Supervisors, since industry readiness has a profound bearing on Agency preparations. The Agency has also been obtaining information from foreign countries approved to

export to the United States, regarding their state of Y2K preparedness. All these sources of information will help FSIS to anticipate where any potential problems could occur, so that preventive action can be taken.

INTERNAL CONTROLS

The Afterlife of a Hotline Complaint

by De'Borah Applegate

Internal Control Staff

Telephone: 202-720-9400

In case you were wondering what ever happened to that Office of Inspector General (OIG) Hotline Complaint you made - here's the scoop.

First of all, when you call the 1-800-424-9121 OIG Hotline Complaint number and file a complaint it is dated, logged in, and the information provided in your complaint is typed up into hard copy text. This information is maintained in the Office of Inspector General (OIG) Hotline Complaints database. All Hotline Complaints are tracked through this database, which assists in documenting the time it takes to look into your complaint, and the time it takes in resolving the complaint.

If your Hotline Complaint is not of a criminal nature, typically it is referred to the Internal Control Staff, with a request from OIG that the Internal Control Staff obtain sufficient information to address the allegations identified in the complaint. After the Internal Control Staff receives this request and reviews the information in the complaint, it is sent to the appropriate field location, or headquarters Labor and Employee Relations Division (L&ERD) for inquiry. In some instances the Internal Control Staff will conduct investigations. The majority of Hotline Complaints involve

allegations of misconduct, many of which are sent to the Employee Relations Branch (ERB), in Minneapolis, MN for inquiry. When the ERB receives this request, they identify a collateral duty field investigator or ERB Specialist, who will conduct an inquiry or investigation into the allegations identified in your Hotline Complaint.

The field investigator is responsible for interviewing and collecting data, and pertinent information associated with the allegations in your complaint. The field investigator must obtain all information pertinent to your complaint in order to prove or disprove the allegations. After interviews are conducted, records are reviewed, statements are taken, and the fact finding is completed, a report of investigation or inquiry is completed and sent to the Internal Control Staff. This report provides information to assist in determining that the allegations were substantiated, or that the allegations in your complaint were not substantiated.

The Internal Control Staff receives this information and reviews it for completeness and thoroughness. The evidence reported must be consistent with the conclusions that the allegations were proven or not proven. Your complaint is investigated within the guidelines of conducting a misconduct investigation, or the guidelines pertaining to a specific type of investigation, such as Waste and Mismanagement or Health and Safety complaints. Investigations are conducted without bias or prejudice.

It is the goal of the Internal Control Staff and the OIG to close Hotline Complaints within 90 days. This cannot always be done in the afterlife of a Hotline Complaint due to the complexity of some complaints, non-availability of knowledgeable persons identified in the complaint, or due to the lack of

resources to conduct these inquiries and investigations.

Your Hotline Complaint has now been investigated. The Internal Control Staff provides these findings to the OIG and ERB and they determine what appropriate action, if any is warranted.

This decision would partly depend on whether or not the allegations in your Hotline Complaint were substantiated or not substantiated. The FSIS Directive 4735.3, "Employee Responsibilities and Conduct" identifies the basic provisions for employee conduct, the types of misconduct, and types of discipline, which are applicable.

Your Hotline Complaint does not get put to rest once you make the phone call or send in a written complaint to the OIG. And even after your complaint is investigated, it is still alive. Your complaint continues to be addressed even though you may not be aware of it. The Internal Control Staff receives the report of investigation or report of inquiry and reviews the results. The report is reviewed to ensure that all investigative steps were taken in order to obtain the facts related to the complaint.

Investigative steps include such things as interviewing witnesses, interviewing the Complainant, interviewing appropriate supervisors, conducting records reviews, and obtaining written statements from knowledgeable persons. In some cases physical evidence is collected, but most often in misconduct cases, it is the action of someone being investigated and therefore physical evidence is not present.

The Internal Control Staff also reviews the investigations and inquires to ensure that if an investigative step was not conducted, that it is identified and brought to the attention of the investigator, and further inquiry is

conducted. It is mandatory that the five "W's" and the "How" be answered. The five "W's" refers to the Who, What, When, Where, and Why questions the investigator must answer during conduct of an investigation. The "How" question is a mandatory aspect of all investigations and must be answered. For example, how was misconduct perpetrated by an individual, or how were acts of mismanagement performed by an employee?

The Internal Control Staff may determine investigative reports or reports of inquiry are insufficient to be closed because all knowledgeable persons associated with the complaint were not interviewed. Knowledgeable persons are considered anyone identified in the complaint, and people who were not identified in the complaint but have knowledge of the events, acts, or circumstances as identified in the complaint.

The Internal Control Staff does not make recommendations regarding actions to be taken as a result of the investigation or inquiry findings, but acts in an oversight role to ensure that complete and thorough investigations are conducted without bias.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

The Season for Gifts

by: Kathy Welsh

Labor and Employee Relations
Division

Telephone: 202-720-5657

During the Holiday season, it is natural that we reflect on the many "gifts" that we have - family, friends, health, and employment. It is also a good time to reflect on the gifts that

we *should not* have - those from prohibited sources. The instances of prohibited sources offering us some type of gift increase during this time of year. Just because it is Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanza, or New Year's doesn't make it OK to accept a gift if it would be prohibited during other times in the year. As always, virtually anything given by someone outside the Agency with whom we have an official relationship is prohibited. This includes gifts offered by contractors, suppliers, any segments of the industries we regulate, and even from foreign government officials.

"Accepting a thing of value" is a charge that, if proven, usually results in serious disciplinary action. And a gift or "thing of value" isn't just limited to something like a bottle of wine, a ham, or a box of candy. A gift could also be a discount or loan, tickets, meals or other Holiday gatherings, performing maintenance or repairs, etc. Politely and graciously refusing any such offerings is always the safest and best course of action. Letting your supervisor know of the offer is also a good idea.

This time of year is also a good time to remember the restrictions on gifts among coworkers. There are no restrictions on gifts between peers or from supervisors to subordinates; however, in the latter case, one must guard against the appearance of favoritism. While supervisors are generally barred from accepting gifts from subordinates, the regulations provide a number of exceptions - for example, subordinates may:

- make voluntary noncash gifts (or contributions towards a group non-cash gift) of \$10 or less;
- share expenses for food

and refreshment for an office party; and,

- offer traditional levels of hospitality in one's personal residence (e.g. hosting a dinner party or bringing a gift, such as wine and/or flowers, to a dinner party).

Finally, a word concerning office parties may be in order. There are few explicit rules governing office parties. Goodwill moderated by common sense and concern for public perception should rule. Of course, use of appropriated funds for refreshments is prohibited, as is the solicitation of refreshments, door prizes, or any other items of value from outside sources.

In any of these matters, it is always best to ask before you act. Questions can be referred to your supervisor, and to any of the Agency's Employee Relations Specialists in the Office of Management Support Staffs in Minneapolis or in Washington.

Supervisors should make sure that employees are reminded of these prohibitions.

Have a safe, happy, and meaningful Holiday season!

To comment on this newsletter or to submit an article for publication, please contact:

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The current and past editions of *The Beacon* are available electronically on the FSIS OpenDesk and Exchange mail systems as well as on the FSIS Website at: www.fsis.usda.gov/om/adserv.htm

ATTACHMENT 1

Workforce of the Future Steering Committee (WOFSC) Membership

Chair, WOFSC	Yvonne Davis
<u>Office of the Administrator</u>	
Congressional & Public Affairs Staff	Barbara O'Brien
Executive Management Staff	Sharin Sachs; Jane LeClerc
Food Safety Education Staff	Herb Gantz
Special Assistant for Diversity, OA	Cynthia Mercado
<u>Office of Public Health & Science</u>	Eli Walker; Bonnie Buntain; Jacque Knight
<u>Office of Policy, Program Development and Evaluation</u>	
Policy Office	Krista Baldwin
Inspection Systems	Perry Davis
<u>Office of Field Operations</u>	
District Enforcement Operations	Carol Seymour
District Inspection Operations	William Smith
Technical Service Center	Barbara Masters
District Office - Springdale	Michelle Fisher
Circuit Supervisors - Atlanta, Phila.	John Floyd, Ilene Arnold
<u>Office of Management</u>	
Labor & Employee Relations	Don Musacchio
Planning	Linda Russell
Civil Rights	Shelia Clemons
Human Resources	Joanne Bolton, John Esgar, Chuck Gensheimer; Jim Duoos; Jill Kubina; Dan Burkard; Rhonda Holmes
Budget	Dan Metzler
NAFV Representative	Dr. Douglas Fulnechek
NJC Representatives	Chairman Delmer Jones; Vice- Chairman Arthur Hughes
ATSP Representative	President Michael Donovan
Office of General Counsel	Hal Reuben (advisor)

ATTACHMENT 2



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food Safety
and Inspection
Service

Budget
Division

October 22, 1999

Gil Flores, Bank of America
Federal Government Visa Travel Card Program
1801 K. Street, NW, (M-100)
Washington, DC 20006-1396

Dear Mr. Flores:

This is to advise you and your Collection Department that many Food Safety and Inspection Service employees who have VISA official-travel charge cards are currently experiencing delayed travel reimbursements. This is a result of the implementation of a new Department-wide accounting system that is occurring throughout the month of October.

According to the Financial Management Division, this accounting system conversion is necessary to bring the Department's accounting system into compliance with requirements prescribed in recently passed legislation and regulations. During this conversion period, the payment processing of all travel claims and reimbursements is being put on HOLD. This is affecting all travel claims submitted to the National Finance Center (NFC) in this month.

In addition, some employees who recently submitted travel claims are now receiving notification from NFC that their reimbursements have been scheduled for payment by Treasury. When, in fact, their payments have not been processed. This could possibly cause problems if they write checks against funds that are not in their bank accounts.

Therefore, we ask that you not allow the accounts of employees affected by this conversion and the delayed processing of their travel claims (a) be suspended or cancelled, (b) incur late-payment fees, or (c) be charged return-check fees because of insufficient funds. Thank you for your assistance in this problem.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "M. Ray Bolyard".

M. Ray Bolyard, Director
Budget Division
Office of Management